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EPITAPHAL INSCRIPTIONS.

IN the course of several years' wanderings among the resting-places of my ancestors, I have encountered numerous epitaphs, many of which are remarkable for the ideas expressed as well as for the mode of expression, and as they indicate many phases of thought and feeling, as they offer a certain index to the character of the people from whom they were derived, it has occurred to me that a record of them would at all events prove interesting, and doubtless, also, of value.

My object in presenting the present paper is not so much to give an exhaustive or even critical treatment of epitaphal inscriptions, to analyze the motives leading to them and discuss their bearings from an ethnological point of view, as to present a brief outline of what is conveyed by such inscriptions, and thus to offer an incentive to their further and more accurate study. For this reason I shall briefly glance at the history of the subject and offer a few illustrations of what may be looked for, and, finally, submit a small collection which I have personally made, the accuracy of which I can vouch for.

The literature of the subject is not copious, and, so far as I can ascertain at present, apart from short monographs and collections which will be found scattered through numerous writings, few systematic attempts at collecting epitaphs have as yet been made on this side of the Atlantic. One of the most important of these is a collection of epitaphs as found at Burial Hill, Plymouth, Massachusetts, by Bradford Kingman.¹ The inscriptions given number somewhat over 2,200 and are chiefly of the nature of simple records. There are, however, a number of epitaphs in verse and prose, which possess considerable interest. The collection is prefaced by an historical statement and concludes with figures showing the various styles of tombstones employed, while epitaphs of prominent persons are accompanied by important biographical notes which greatly enhance their value. No classification is attempted, and the whole work is more nearly comparable with that by James Brown, rather than with the work of Pettigrew. Other valuable collections are those by Green, Kippax, and Whitmore.

In England, a few works on the subject have appeared. The earliest of these of which I have personal knowledge is by Pettigrew, and was published in 1857.² In this work, the author speaks

¹ *Epitaphs from Burial Hill, Plymouth, Mass.*, from 1657-1892, with Biographical and Historical Notes, Illustrated, by Bradford Kingman. Brookline. 1892.

² *Chronicles of the Tombs*. A select collection of epitaphs, by Thomas Joseph Pettigrew, F. R. S., F. S. A. London. 1857. H. G. Bohn.

of the remarkable deficiency of English works on Epitaphal Inscriptions, and points out that at that date (1857) there was practically nothing except a short essay by Dr. Johnson. Pettigrew's work is by far the most valuable publication of the kind with which I am acquainted, and I shall have occasion to refer to it again.

In 1867 James Brown published a work on Epitaphs and Monumental Inscriptions¹ as found in the Greyfriars Churchyard at Edinburgh. This work practically includes what is contained in "An Theatre of Mortality," collected by R. Montieth in 1704.²

It, however, goes much beyond Montieth, and makes a systematic record of all the inscriptions to be found in Greyfriars. A valuable introduction, by Dr. David Laing, gives a history of this extremely interesting place. No classification of the epitaphs here gathered is attempted, the order being according to a systematic examination of the churchyard itself.

Finally, there is a collection of epitaphs by H. J. Loaring, published without date.³ In this little book the author traverses much of the same ground covered by Pettigrew in a concise account of the origin and use of epitaphs, to which he has added, also, an account of the burial customs of various people. The epitaphs in this collection have been gathered from numerous localities, and are wholly devoid of those associated data which render such publications of value. There are also collections by Andrews, Briscoe, McCaul, Ravenshaw, Cansick, Jennie, Gibson, and Northcote, but I have not had an opportunity to consult them.

Pettigrew quotes Camden as tracing the origin of epitaphs to the scholars of Linus, the Theban poet, who, he says, "first bewayled theyre master, when he was slayne, in doleful verse, called of him *Ælinum*, and afterwards Epitaphia, for that they were first sung at buryals, and after engraved upon the sepulchres. They were also called *Eulogia* and *Tituli* by the Romans, and by our ancient progenitors buryall song."⁴

Loaring suggests⁵ that epitaphs originated in a sense of immortality, and agrees with Pettigrew,⁶ that the importance of monuments

¹ *The Epitaphs and Monumental Inscriptions in Greyfriars Churchyard, Edinburgh*, by James Brown. Edinburgh. 1867. J. Moodie Miller.

² *An Theatre of Mortality*; or, the illustrious inscriptions extant upon the several monuments erected over the dead bodies (of the sometime honorable persons) buried within the Grayfriars Churchyard, and other churches and burial-places within the city of Edinburgh and suburbs; collected and Englished, by R. Montieth, M. A. Edinburgh. 1704. Small 8vo.

³ *Epitaphs; Quaint, Curious and Elegant*, with remarks on the obsequies of various nations. Compiled and collected by Henry James Loaring. London. William Tegg.

⁴ Pettigrew, 21.

⁵ Loaring's Epitaphs, 1.

⁶ Pettigrew.

and inscriptions in the illustration of local history cannot be too strongly maintained, since the object to be attained in the erection of monumental buildings or inscribed tablets are twofold : being not only to record the character of the deceased, but also to offer to us a lesson in the remembrance of our mortality.

According to the commonly accepted definition, an epitaph may be regarded as any inscription upon a tomb, which is written, usually in prose or verse, in honor or memory of the dead, but it may be as well to recall the definition given by Weever in his work on *Funeral Monuments*, published so long ago as 1631, and quoted by Pettigrew to the following effect.

He says : " An epitaph is a superscription either in prose or verse ; or an astrict pithy diagram, written, carved, or engraven upon the tomb, grave, or sepulchre of the defunct, briefly declaring (and that sometimes with a kind of commiseration) the name, the age, the deserts, the dignities, the state, the praises both of body and mind, the good or bad fortunes in life, and the manner and time of the death of the person therein interred."

Pettigrew himself says that " epitaphs may recount the virtues and glorious actions of the deceased, and hold them up for our imitation ; and they may also narrate the descent of the individual, and may mourn his loss. . . . All that is expressive of love, sorrow, faith, hope, resignation and piety, should characterize an epitaph." ¹

It would be of great interest and considerable value, were one to undertake the laborious task of a comparative study of ancient and modern epitaphs. Our present purpose will not admit of this, but if any general deduction is admissible at the present time, I should say that there seems to be a decreasing tendency to the use of epitaphs proper, particularly among the better educated and refined, while such monumental inscriptions as are employed by this class partake more of the nature of simple records.

Within the limits of a short paper such as this, it is impossible to do justice to the many features of great interest connected with this subject. For a fuller account, and for much information both interesting and valuable, I can only refer to the works cited.

Classification of epitaphs is not an easy matter, since it admits of considerable latitude. Loaring classes them as (*a*) elegant, (*b*) professional, (*c*) witty and grotesque, (*d*) miscellaneous.

Pettigrew, on the other hand, makes no less than nineteen groups as follows : (*a*) laudatory, (*b*) bombastic, (*c*) adulatory, (*d*) admonitory, (*e*) rhetorical, (*f*) punning, (*g*) prosopopœia, (*h*) acrostic, (*i*) enigmatical, (*j*) denunciatory, (*k*) revengeful, (*l*) satirical, (*m*) condemnatory, (*n*) professional, (*o*) ridiculous, (*p*) epitaphs of nobility, (*q*) epitaphs of poets, (*r*) epitaphs of ecclesiastics, (*s*) miscellaneous.

¹ Pettigrew, 25.

So minute a classification as this will doubtless satisfy all requirements. A few examples of some of the most conspicuous types may be of interest in this connection.

Of those classed as elegant, an epitaph in the Wimbledon churchyard, on a young woman, will offer a fair illustration :—

In life's sweet opening dawn she sought her God,
And the gay path of youth, with caution trod ;
In bloom of beauty humbly turned aside
The incense flattery offered to her pride.
Her front with blushing modesty she bound,
And on her lips the law of truth was found ;
Fond to oblige, too gentle to offend,
Beloved by all, to all the good a friend :
The bad she censured by her life alone ;
Blind to their faults, severe upon her own.
In others' joys and griefs a part she bore,
And with the needy shared her little store ;
At distance viewed the world with pious dread,
And to God's temple for protection fled ;
There sought that peace which Heaven alone can give,
And learned to die ere others learn to live.
Though closed these eyes, by which all hearts were charmed ;
Though every feature of each grace disarmed,
Yet think not that her piety was vain ;
O'er vanquished death the immortal saint prevails,
And opening heaven the new born angel hails.

It is impossible to read these lines without bringing before our mental vision an image of one of these ideally lovely women whom all adore for their many virtues, and whose presence among us diffuses an indescribable influence which we all feel but find it impossible to analyze or define ; a woman whom we acknowledge by common consent to be cast not in the same mould with ordinary mortals, but to move in a sphere distinctly above and apart.

Among professional epitaphs, I venture to select one by Soame Jenyns on Dr. Johnson, which, as a condensed biography could hardly be surpassed :—

Here lies poor Johnson, Reader ! have a care,
Tread lightly, lest you rouse a sleeping bear,
Religious, moral, gen'rous and humane,
He was, but self-conceited, rude and vain ;
Ill-bred, and overbearing in dispute,
A scholar and a Christian, yet a brute.
Would you know all his wisdom and his folly,
His actions, sayings, mirth and melancholy ;
Boswell and Thrale, retailers of his wit,
Will tell you how he wrote, and talked, and spit.

As illustrating another style in the same class, I cannot refrain

from citing an epitaph on Hogarth, which is found in the Chiswick churchyard, written by Garrick : —

Farewell, great painter of mankind,
Who reach'd the noblest point of art,
Whose pictured morals charm the mind,
And thro' the eye correct the heart.

If genius fire thee, reader, stay ;
If nature touch thee, drop a tear ;
If neither move thee, turn away,
For Hogarth's honor'd dust lies here.

No marble pomp, or monumental praise,
My tomb, this dial-epitaph, these lays ;
Pride and low mouldering clay but ill-agree ;
Death levels me to beggars — Kings to me.

Alive, instruction was my work each day ;
Dead, I persist instruction to convey ;
Here, reader, mark, perhaps now in thy prime,
The stealthy steps of never ending Time ;
Tho't be what I am — catch the present hour,
Employ that well, for that 's within thy power.

Of the witty and grotesque, numerous examples are to be found. One such is as follows : —

Under this stone, aged three-score and ten,
Lie the remains of William Wood-hen.

N. B. — For hen read cock. Cock would n't come in rhyme.

Of punning epitaphs, one example will suffice. The name *More* has been prolific of punning inscriptions.

Here lies *one More* and *no More* than he,
One More & no More ! how can that be ?
Why, *one More* and *no More* may well lie here alone,
But here lies *one More*, and that 's *More* than one.

It is impossible to properly estimate the proper value of an epitaph if divested of all those surrounding conditions in which it may be said to have had its origin. Epitaphs are intimately connected with the religious life, the aspirations, the romance of the people from whom they are derived, and it is therefore a matter of considerable importance that, together with a collection of such inscriptions, there should be given some account of the people themselves. It is also of first importance, for the purpose of comparative studies, that the date of each epitaph should be carefully ascertained. It is with these considerations in mind that I have brought together the following inscriptions.

The principal localities from which I have collected data are

Portsmouth and Newcastle in New Hampshire, Kittery and York in Maine, and Frelighsburg and Lacolle in the province of Quebec.

Portsmouth, N. H., was first settled in 1623 by immigrants sent out by the Laconia Company, under direction of Mason and Gorges, who, about ten years later, became proprietors of the grant. Shortly after the first company landed, a settlement was made somewhat farther down the Piscataqua River on what was then known as Great Island, now the town of Newcastle. Here, as in the present town of Portsmouth, are to be found the places of interment of some of the earliest settlers. On the opposite side of the river, in the State of Maine, stands the town of Kittery which was settled at the same time and by members of the same company, while eight miles farther eastward along the coast is the historic town of York. The first settlement here was simultaneous with that at Kittery, but when Gorges came into possession of this portion of the grant, he at once instituted a city form of government under the direction of his brother. But the city of Gorgeana, which he designed as a monument to his colonial achievements, was destined to disappear, and after a very short period the government lapsed into that of a town, while the name was changed to that which it now bears. Here, as in the other localities cited, places of interment of considerable age are to be found, but the old burying-ground has been so encroached upon by buildings as to utterly destroy many of the oldest graves, while others are greatly endangered.

The first settlers in all these towns numbered among them men of high intelligence and great resoluteness of purpose. They were none of them, like their Plymouth brethren, the objects of religious intolerance and persecution; nevertheless, they were, for the most part, men of settled convictions, who were capable of expressing their views in vigorous language, and of maintaining them also, when occasion required. Several of those earliest names, as well as those of their immediate descendants, became distinguished in the early colonial history.

As the years passed and the colony became possessed of greater attractions, there were added to the earlier settlers, gentlemen who could claim distinction as such, both by birth and education, and who sought the New World as a land of promise for enlarged opportunities in trade.

That part of Lacolle which lies immediately along the international boundary dates practically from the time of the early Dutch in New York, but the larger number of inhabitants, as we find them to-day, are of very much later origin and are essentially Anglo-Saxon.

Frelighsburg was practically settled about the time of the Ameri-

can Revolution by United Empire Loyalists, whose descendants have constituted the sole population until a very recent date.

It will thus be seen that our present theme deals wholly with people of the same stock, having similar traditions, sentiments, religion, and customs; while the period of time covered — about 270 years — is sufficient to admit of considerable change in practice, as well as of thought and religious sentiment.

So far as my observations have gone, epitaphs appear to fall into three leading groups, according to the social strata from which they emanate. To the first belong those which are derived from the educated, the cultured and refined. As a rule, it is not common to find epitaphs among this class, and this doubtless has its explanation in that high type of thought and sensitive regard for the feelings and memory of others which makes one shrink from exposing the inner recesses of the soul to the public gaze and criticism. But epitaphs, nevertheless, do occur among this class. They are then for the most part short, and consist of some well chosen selection from Scripture or from a well-known author, and when original, they express, in choice language, sentiments of a high order. In all such cases, they are the direct exponents of the manner of thought of those whom they concern, or by whom they were written.

Probably the best example I could select, illustrative of this type, is to be found in the cemetery at Kittery Point. The lines are dedicated to the memory of Levi Lincoln Thaxter, whose wife, Celia, is well known for her poetry. He is said to have been a devoted admirer of Browning, whose works he would read hour after hour, seated upon a bowlder whose iron sides had been smoothed by many centuries of conflict with the ocean. This rock now marks his last resting-place, and upon one of its smoothly cut sides are engraved the following lines from Browning: —

Thou whom these eyes saw never, say friend true
Who say my soul, helped onward by my song
Though all unwittingly, has helped thee too?
I gave but of the little that I knew:
How were the gift requited, while along
Life's path I page couldst then make **weakness strong**,
Help me with knowledge for life's old, death's new:

R. B. to L. L. T. April, 1885.

It occasionally happens that expression is given to some gross eccentricity on the part of the deceased, who may have prepared his own epitaph. An instance of this kind occurs in the burying-ground at Portsmouth, but I have unfortunately not preserved a record of it.

Epitaphs may also serve as the record of real or fancied wrong of

which the deceased was a victim, and the surviving friends have chosen this as the most effective mode of public vindication. A most remarkable case of this kind occurs at Milford, N. H., as recorded in the Portsmouth "Journal," of September 29, 1888. It is as follows : —

CAROLINE H.

Wife of

Calvin Cutter, M. D.

Murdered by the Baptist Ministry & Baptist Churches, as follows : — Sept. 28, 1838, *Æt.* 33.

She was accused of Lying in Church Meeting, by the Rev. D. D. Pratt, & Deac. Albert Adams, was

Condemned by the church unheard. She was reduced to poverty by Deac. William Wallace.

When an *exparte* council was asked by the Milford Baptist Church, by the advice of this committee, George Raymond, Calvin Averill & Andrew Hutchinson, they voted not to receive any communication upon the subject !

The Rev. Mark Carpenter said he thought as the good old Deac. Pearson said " we have got Cutter down and it is best to keep him down." The intentional and

Malicious destruction of her Character & happiness as above described destroyed her life.

Her last words upon the subject were, Tell the truth & the iniquity will come out.

Or again, the epitaph may be employed among this class to serve as the medium of expressing religious sentiments and duty towards others. Two very remarkable instances of this kind have come under my notice. The first occurs in the old cemetery at York, and relates to the infant daughter of the celebrated Parson Moody who was so conspicuous a figure in the Louisburg expedition under William, afterwards Sir William Pepperrell, and of whom Parkman speaks more than once in his "Half Century of Conflict." The epitaph was undoubtedly written by Moody himself, and it is hardly a matter of surprise that the subject of it succumbed to the vast burdens of life with which she gained so brief an acquaintance, when she was confronted with surroundings capable of producing lines such as these : —

Resurrection.

To Immortality in spotless Beauty with all other
 Bodily Perfections, after the fashion of Christ's
 Glorious Body is expected for the sub-adjacent
 Dust of Lucy Moody, who was born & died
 July 6th, 1705.

Thus birth, spousals to Christ, Death, Coronation,
 All in One Day, may have their celebration.

Particular comment is unnecessary, but the lines are certainly characteristic of the man and of the times in which he lived.

The second instance was derived from East Franklin, Vt. It is an epitaph written by the deceased, and is intended as a record of his religious views. It distinctly shows that he had no belief whatever, according to any of the recognized forms of religion, but it also shows that, however short he may have fallen, in conforming to established forms and creeds, he was, nevertheless, a disciple of the Great Master in his adhesion to the Golden Rule. The whole composition discloses great resolution, independence of thought, courage of conviction, and, with it all, a just regard for his fellow-men. It is as follows : —

Name and Sentiments.

All nature self-existent powers invite,
 Life gives and takes forms, solves as adaptate,
 Virtue obeys, Vice disobeys her laws,
 In nature all good, this only evil draws
 No good or ill by supernatural cause.
 Let not imagination take its flight,
 Upward to fancied regions for delight ;
 Science and virtue lead to happiness,
 Know^a truth, not fantom faith, not bliss.

Dr. Luck
 Died
 1858.

I have no fears because I've got
 No faith nor hope in Juggemaut
 Nor Yoh, Grand Lama, Boud nor Zend,
 Nor Bible systems without end ; —
 Nor alcoran nor Mormon's views
 Nor any creeds that priest dupes use,
 Each class self pure, condemns the rest
 Enlightened minds the whole detest.
 In strongest faith no virtue lies.
 An unbelief no vice implies
 A bare opinion hurts no man
 Then prove it hurts a God, who can.
 To others do, to others give
 As you 'd have done or would receive.

In the second group may be placed those epitaphs which emanate
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from the middle or lower middle class and from people of inferior culture and education. Here the tendency to epitaphs is very marked and may be regarded as the survival of a practice which, in more primitive conditions of society and among ancient people, was a well-recognized practice of the most highly cultured. The one aim is to express endearing sentiments of regard or to record the virtues of the deceased. In many cases there are attempts at original composition, when the results often bear witness to most lamentable failure, with respect to all that constitutes true poetic effect and literary composition. In numerous cases the epitaph is repeated so frequently in widely separated localities as to suggest the use of some common source, such as a book of epitaphs, or that the lapidary keeps a number of epitaphs on hand, as stock in trade, from which selections are chosen. The following examples will sufficiently illustrate the style and thought here found.

An unusual form of epitaph occurs at Dover, N. H. It is a doublet in which husband and wife address each other and give expression to their views concerning some of the great problems of life, and record their mutual faithfulness and attachment: —

Repository
of
Husband and Wife,
Joseph Hartwell. Inanimated
18—. Æt—.

Betsey Hartwell. Inanimated.
Dec. 7th, 1862. Æt. 68.

The following embraces a period of forty-one years. In all our relations toward each other there has been nought but one continuation of fidelity and loving-kindness. We have never participated with nor countenanced in others, secretly or otherwise, that which was calculated to subjugate the masses of the people to the dictation of the few. And now we will return to our common mother with our individualities unimpaired to pass through together the ordeal of earth's chemical laboratory preparatory to recuperation.

HER LAST EXCLAMATIONS.

If you should be taken away I should not survive you. How happy we have been together, Think not, Mr. Hartwell, I like you the less being in the situation you are in. No, it only strengthens my affections. To those who have made professions of friendship, and have falsified them by living acts.

Pass On.

Here we have, on his part, the statement of a well-defined position as a socialist, together with the view that the individual reappears at a later period after passing through death and certain changes incident to and following it. The position thus defined may seem to explain the somewhat awkward situation in which he later found himself, as referred to by Mrs. Hartwell.

On her part, we have evidence of that firm attachment and all-abiding faith in her husband which is a tower of strength in adversity. Even when consigned to prison, her faith in him was not diminished, but rather, as she declares, her affection was strengthened thereby.

Frelighsburg, P. Q. :—

Approach this awful deposit with cautious reflections,
Sacred to the memory of Capt ——
whose mandate came and whose
death took place Sept. 6th, 1818.

A span is all that we can boast,
An inch or two of time,
Man is but vanity and dust,
In all his flower and prime.

Jesus can make a dying bed
Feel soft as downy pillows are.

Death called Alburah long before her hour,
It call'd her tender soul, by break of bliss ;
From the first blossom, from the buds of joy ;—
Those few our noxious fate in blasted leaves,
In the inclement clime of human life.

While time his sharpest teeth prepared,
Our comfort to devour,
There is a hand above the stars
And joys above his power.

This languishing head is at rest,
Its thinking and aching are ore,
This great immovable breast,
Is heaved by affliction no more ;
This heart is no longer the seat
Of trouble and torturing pain,
It ceased to flutter and beat,
It never shall flutter again.

Reader, beware of epithets and exultations,
but let applause be gained by merit.

The following are at Lacolle :—

Farewell dear wife and children dear,
I 'm not yet dead but sleeping here,
My debts are paid my grave you see,
Prepare in death to follow me.

Oh ! lovely youth and thou art gone
With immortality put on.
Thy strength and beauty it is fled
And thou art numbered with the dead.

Adieu little William
 Thy spirit is fled
 Thy fair frame is laid
 In the home of the dead
 The snow banks are o'er thee
 The storm wars around
 And thy poor little body
 Lies low in the ground.

Go home my friends, dry up your tears
 I must lie here till Christ appears.

God my redeemer lives
 And clear from the skies
 Looks down and watches all my dust
 Till he shall bid it rise.

Decay thou tenement of dust
 Pillows of Earthly pride decay,
 A nobler mansion wates the just
 And Jesus, has prepar'd the way.

O happy hour in which I ceased
 From man; for then I found a rest.
 No longer was my Lord unknown.
 Thy light O Jesus in me shine.

Pass a few swiftly fleeting years,
 And all that now in bodies live
 Shall quit like me, this vale of tears
 Their righteous sentence to receive.
 Then like the sun slow wheeling to the wave
 She sunk with glory to the grave.

And now he's dead, his body rests
 Beneath the silent clod,
 His work is done beneath the sun
 His spirit's gone to God.

My body is of little worth
 'Twould soon be mingled with the earth.
 For we are made of clay and must
 Again at death return to dust.

Afflictions sore long time she bore.
 Physicians were in vain
 Till Christ looked from above
 And eased her of her pain.

'T was death, the chilly hand of death
 That seized my faintly fleeting breath,
 Beneath this sod I now repose
 Secure from every storm that blows.

1. When forced to part from those we love
If sure to meet to-morrow
We shall a pang of anguish prove,
And feel a touch of sorrow.
2. But if our thoughts are fixed aright
A cheering hope is given.
Though here our prospects end in night
We meet again in Heaven.

Finally we come to a class of epitaphs in which, with a strong serio-comic element, are recorded certain events in the lives of the deceased. These may be regarded as emanating from people who are almost wholly in the humbler walks of life, and the rough and ready mode of expression employed, is a characteristic element, expressive of the lives they lead and the manner of thought prevalent among them.

A well-known example of this kind occurs at Kittery Point. In it is recorded a tragedy of the sea.

I lost my life in the raging seas,
A Sov'reign God does as he please,
The Kittery friends they did appear,
And my remains lie buried here.

D. P. Penhallow.

MONTREAL, CAN.